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Gaels Win Big Against the Portland Pilots

By Kevin D. Shallat

The game against the University of Portland could not have come soon enough for the Saint Mary's men's basketball team Saturday, Feb. 2. After losing their game against the University of San Diego on the same day the national rankings came out, the team was ranked 21st in the ESPN/USA Today poll, and 20th in the AP poll. The Gaels took out their frustrations on the Pilots and won in a calm, cool, and collected manner Saturday night, downing Portland, 86-49.

Saint Mary's was able to avoid the dreaded trap game, as Randy Bennett and the Gaels made sure there was no let-down against a re-building Portland team. Despite the 37-point win, the game did not turn into a sloppy blowout. The Gaels looked determined to finish strong in this game, as they prepare for the biggest game of the year Monday night, in a nationally televised game against Gonzaga.

"I really believe it's important to finish games well, play well, it affects how you play the next game," said Bennett. "That's why I kept bringing guys back in...I wanted to make sure our guys finished on a positive when they played."

The game was not much of a contest from the opening tip-off. Saint Mary's jumped out to an early 12-3 lead and never looked back. Portland could not generate much offense, as they shot a dismal 29 percent in the first half. Ian O'Leary had the hot hand early, and scored the first five points of the game for the Gaels. O'Leary finished with a season high 20



Ian O'Leary (4)

points in 23 minutes, and was perfect from the field in the second half.

Portland guard Taishi Ito was quick with the ball, but only one player was able to knock down a shot for him, and finished with only one assist on the night. The Pilots were dominated by Saint Mary's in the paint, and were outscored by the Gaels 17-0 in second chance points.

There was one bright spot for Portland Saturday night. Redshirt sophomore Nik Raivio, brother of former Gonzaga star Derek Raivio, scored 18 points for the Pilots.

Patrick Mills gave the fans a scare in the second half when Portland's big man fell on him. Mills left the game, only to return later in the second half. Mills played only 26 minutes in this game, as Bennett presumably wanted to keep his star point guard healthy and rested for the Gonzaga game.

Diamon Simpson had a stellar game for the Gaels, as he connected on six of nine field goals, and finished with 13 points and 15 rebounds. Omar Samhan was one rebound away from a double-double. He finished the game with 18 points and nine rebounds in 23 minutes. Reserve Tron Smith rebounded from a poor shooting performance in San Diego to finish with 10 points, and Carlin Hughes came off the bench and recorded a season high eight assists in 18 minutes.



Tron Smith (23) Photo Tod Fierner

SMC Women's Basketball: Second Half Surge Not Enough Against USF

By Kevin D. Shallat



Lauren Shaughnessy (11)

Photo Gavin Schlissel

The Saint Mary's women's basketball team came up short Thursday, Jan. 24 against the USF Dons in McKeon Pavilion. After a near deadlock at half, the Gaels fell behind big to start the second half. Lauren Shaughnessy did all she could to bring the Gaels back, but the rest of the Gaels were unable to heat up in time to surpass the Dons. San Francisco guard Dominique Carter was on fire, as she torched the Gaels for 35 points. The Dons went on to win this one, 80-68.

This game wasn't as much about Carter's 35 points, as it was more about the off night for most of the Gaels. However, Saint Mary's appeared to be a deeper team than the Dons, despite the fact that they were still without leading rebounder Maija Lahde. The Gaels were also without guard Serena Benavente, who was out with an undisclosed injury. The Saint Mary's bench players outscored the Dons 23-6, but were unable to turn this mismatch into a victory.

Saint Mary's leading scorer Jontelle Smith was 1-7 from 3-point range, and had only two points in the second half, as she may have been slowed by her recent injury. The Gaels were able to keep Carter, the WCC's leading scorer, to only 10 points in the first half, but Shaughnessy was the only Gael in double figures in scoring for the first half. Despite the lack of offense, the Gaels were able to cling to a one-point deficit, as they trailed the Dons 32-31 at halftime.

Shaughnessy was scintillating in the second half. To watch her play Thursday night was worth the price of admission, as she dribbled around screens to knock down jumpers all night long. Shaughnessy finished with 18 points, five rebounds, four assists, and four steals, in 37 minutes.

The bench players stepped up for the Gaels in this game, as Suzie Davis led the reserves with 10 points and four rebounds in 13 minutes of play. Davis hit a

three-pointer to make it a ten point game with 3:29 to go, and the Gaels were able to cut the lead to ten again with 1:28 to play, but simply ran out of time.

Despite foul trouble, Louella Tomlinson put up big numbers in a short span of time. Tomlinson finished with 11 points, seven rebounds, and 5 blocks, in only 18 minutes. Tomlinson's mind-boggling statistics are so efficient, it leaves fans wondering, despite the obvious foul trouble, why she doesn't log more minutes.

When Tomlinson logs big minutes, the Gaels seem to win. Tomlinson's minutes are much like the Gaels win-loss record, a bit of a mystery. Saint Mary's beat Fresno State, who sits atop the WAC at 6-0. They also beat Santa Clara, who up until now, have only one loss, which was against the Gaels. However, the season is still young, and the Gaels have a chance to get everybody healthy and hot at the same time to make a run in the WCC.

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Upcoming Sports Events at Saint Mary's College

Men's Basketball vs. Santa Clara
Friday, Feb. 8 at 7:05 p.m.
McKeon Pavilion

Men's Tennis vs. Utah
Friday, Feb. 8 at 3 p.m.
SMC

Women's Basketball vs. Santa Clara
Saturday, Feb. 9 at 7 p.m.
McKeon Pavilion

Softball vs. Sonoma State
Saturday, Feb. 9 at noon and 2 p.m.
SMC

Men's Tennis vs. San Francisco
Sunday, Feb. 10 at noon
SMC

Women's Basketball vs. Loyola Marymount
Thursday, Feb. 14 at 7 p.m.
McKeon Pavilion

Women's Basketball vs. Pepperdine
Saturday, Feb. 16 at 2 p.m.
McKeon Pavilion

Softball vs. Netherlands National Team
Saturday, Feb. 16 at noon
SMC

For information about upcoming season schedules, visit the official Saint Mary's athletics website at www.SMCGaels.com.

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